



Gary Stewart
Editor

KM's Chad Pearson hopes to make run for state title

Hard work has paid off for Kings Mountain High cross country runner Chad Pearson who won the Southwestern 3A Conference championship last week at East Rutherford.

And new Mountaineer Coach Sherry Brown and others who have noticed the 5-7 junior's progress this year feel the best may be yet to come.



CHAD PEARSON

Pearson will be one of the favorites to win the Western Regional Meet Saturday at West Henderson High School, and he also has his sights set on the State Championship November 8 at McAlpine Park in Charlotte. He has to be on one of the top four teams or finish as one of the top five individuals to qualify for the state.

Pearson set two course records this season while winning six of seven regular season meets and SWC Runner of the Year honors. He holds the school record of 15:38 on the 3.1-mile KMHS and set the record of 16:13 on the 3-mile East Rutherford course in last week's conference championship. He beat his closest opponent by 30 seconds and broke the course record by 39 seconds.

"He ran last year, but this year he has really come on strong," says Coach Brown. "He is a hard worker. He will run at practice and then go home and run on his own. He's the hardest working kid I've ever seen. He also runs road races on Saturdays on his own. He has a lot of heart, and is a natural runner. He loves it."

Pearson said he became interested in cross country through the encouragement of his cousin, John Foster, a former KMHS runner. His best time last year was 16 minutes even, and he came in second in two meets. To improve his times he went out for the track team last spring and posted several first place finishes in the 3200, 1600 and 3200 meter relays.

He has put a lot of time into running. He averages running 35 to 40 miles a week during the off-season, runs about six miles a day with other members of the KMHS team, and during the off-season has run as much as 13 miles a day.

He has Regional experience in both cross country and track. He finished 23rd out of 150 runners at last year's Regional, and although he is not familiar with the West Henderson course he feels good about his chances of winning there this week.

"I feel like I can win it or come close to winning it," he said. "Hopefully, I can win the state championship."

Pearson has run the 3.1-mile McAlpine course before, and he predicts it will take a time of 16 minutes or less to win the state championship there.

"If I get there, I feel like I'll stand a pretty good chance," he said.

Pearson said he also looks forward to next season when the Mountaineers should stand a good chance to win the SWC team championship. They improved from a fifth place finish to third place in this year's conference run, and will have most of their runners back next year.

Brown also looks forward to that challenge. "All of our guys improved their time by a minute and a half during the season," she said. "We had aimed for two minutes, but all of them have improved on one course or another."

Tim Schwantes improved his time by 42 seconds on the KM course and 1.05 minutes at East Rutherford. Kenny Houston improved his time by 40 seconds, Ben Howell by 1.27 minutes, Alan Gibson by 1.59 minutes, Naoki Nishiyama by 51 seconds, and Josh McDaniel by 2.12 minutes.

Other members of the KM team are Eric Boyd, Bossit Gangoo and TJ Arwood.

PICKIN AND GRINNIN'

This week's high school football winners will be Kings Mountain over South Point, East Rutherford over North Gaston, Burns over R-S Central, Maiden over Bessemer City, Shelby over Chase, Crest over East Burke, Freedom over McDowell, Hunter Huss over Vance, Olympic over East Gaston, and Ashbrook over West Mecklenburg. (Last week 9-3, season 69-21).

This week's ACC winners will be North Carolina over Georgia Tech, Clemson over Wake Forest, Florida State over N.C. State, and Virginia over Maryland. (Last week 3-0, Season 43-11).

A BIGGIE KM at South Point for another big test

Kings Mountain's Mountaineers, who last week appeared to be sailing for at least a state playoff berth even if they lost the showdown for the Southwestern Conference lead with East Rutherford, now find themselves having to win their final two games to have a shot at the playoffs.

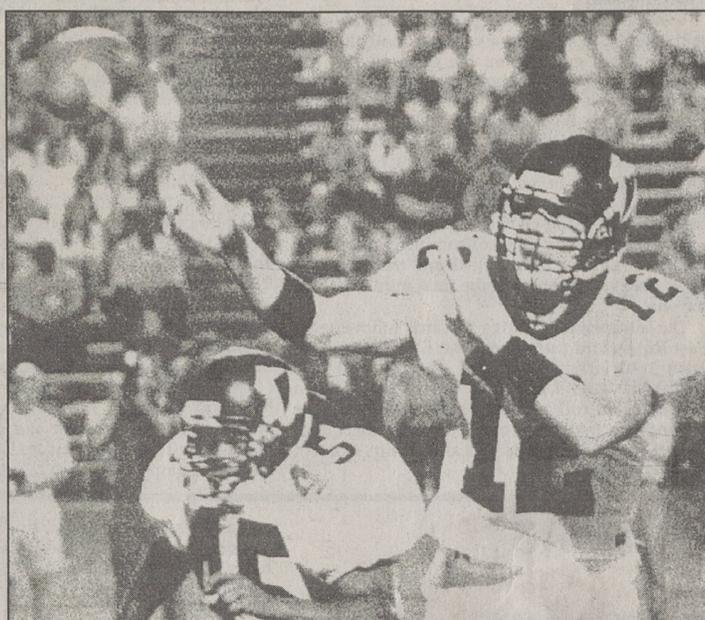
With Burns' victory over South Point last week, a whole new light has been cast on the SWC race since Burns could force a two or three-way tie for the championship by defeating East Rutherford in the last week of the regular season.

But the Mountaineers can't be concerned with Burns and East when they travel to Belmont's Lineberger Stadium Friday night to take on the explosive South Point Red Raiders.

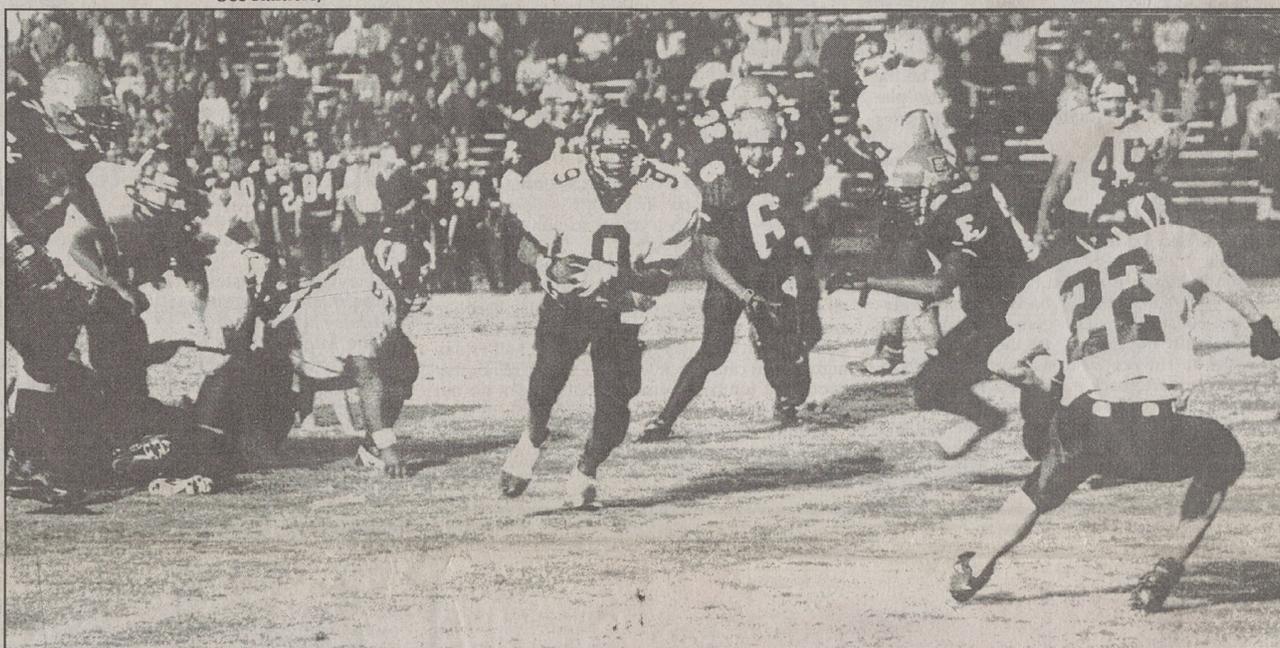
Kings Mountain, 2-1 in the conference and 5-4 overall, will need one of their better efforts to turn back the young and talented Raiders in what has proven to be hostile territory over the past several years. The Raiders always play their best in front of their hometown fans.

"They're very dangerous offensively," says Kings Mountain Coach Ron Massey.

See Raiders, 2-B



LOOKING SOUTH - Kings Mountain quarterback Anthony Ash gets off a pass against East Rutherford in last week's SWC loss at East. The Mountaineers face another tough challenge this week at South Point.



MOUNTAINEER TOUCHDOWN - Kings Mountain's Joseph Bell cuts back across the East Rutherford secondary for a nine-yard touchdown run in last week's Southwestern 3A Conference game at East Rutherford. The Cavaliers surprised the Mounties 20-13 in the battle for first place.

Slow start dooms KM in loss to East

East Rutherford held Kings Mountain's offense to three and out on four of their first five possessions while building a 20-0 first half lead, then held off a Mountaineer comeback bid in the second half to defeat the Mountaineers 20-13 and take over sole possession of first place in the Southwestern 3A Conference Friday night at Forest City.

The win gives the Cavaliers with a 3-0 conference and 7-1 overall record heading into a game this Friday at North Gaston. The Mountaineers, 2-1 and 5-4, face a rugged challenge at South Point against a talented Red Raider team that faces a must win situation.

Friday's first half was a complete turnaround for the Mountaineers, whose defense and special teams had set the pace in earlier shutout conference wins over Burns and R-S Central. Friday, it was East Rutherford's defense and special teams that controlled the game.

The Cavaliers used two big plays to grab a quick 14-0 lead, then drove 55 yards in the final minutes of the first half to score what turned out

to be the clinching touchdown.

For the most part, the Mountaineer defense did a good job on East Rutherford's leading rusher Josh Russell, who gained 74 yards in 23 carries, but Russell broke a 61-yard punt return right up the middle of the field to set up the Cavaliers' first touchdown early in the second period. The Mountaineers finally caught Russell at the 11 yard line, but five plays later quarterback Casey Sears score from one yard out for a 7-0 lead.

On their very next possession, Chad Jimmerson streaked past the KM secondary and Sears hit him in stride with a perfect 52-yard touchdown strike to run the score to 14-0.

Meanwhile, the Mountaineers were having trouble moving the ball against a smaller, but very quick East defense. The Mountaineers managed only two first downs and 29 yards rushing in the first half and their usually quick running attack managed only three runs of 10 or more yards.

"We were very disappointed in our first half performance, obviously," said KM Coach Ron

Massey. "You look back and you try to analyze and everything, and a lot of times you don't know how 16- and 17-year-old kids are going to react. This group has to learn how to handle prosperity and learn that we've got to play hard every week."

The only bright spot for the Mountaineers in the first half was an apparent 75-yard return of a punt for a touchdown by Joseph Bell, which would have put KM on top 6-0, but it was called back on a clip.

A 40-yard punt return to the 47 late in the half gave the Mountaineers a chance to trim the margin to one TD. Anthony Hillman ripped off a 10-yard run for a first down at the East 43, and two plays later the Mounties faced a third and five at the 38. But the East defense swarmed on Kendrick Bell to hold him to a zero yard pass reception, and on fourth and five James Hines of the Cavaliers broke through to sack quarterback Anthony Ash for a seven-yard loss to give East possession at the 45.

See East, 2-B



BIG GUN FOR CAVALIERS - East Rutherford running back Josh Russell (42) runs hard for the Cavaliers in last week's 20-13 win over Kings Mountain at East Rutherford. Closing in to make the tackle for the

Mounties are Mark Roper (3), Michael Thompson (74), Boyd Mason (60), Keyotta Huskey (30) and Toby Sims (31).